

*Lara M. Brown, Ph.D.*

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June 20, 2021

Dr. Donald R. Bobbitt  
President, University of Arkansas System  
Chair, Search Committee for the Clinton School Dean  
2404 North University Avenue  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72207

Dear Dr. Bobbitt:

In response to your advertised search, I respectfully submit my application for consideration for the position of Dean of the Clinton School of Public Service at the University of Arkansas.

From my perspective, this is an exceptionally interesting position. For in addition to having the opportunity to shape the vision and lead of one of the handful of graduate schools founded by a former U.S. president, the Clinton School of Public Service is committed, as is the school's namesake, to "putting people first." From a curriculum that includes fieldwork and experiential learning to the concurrent degree programs that span the University of Arkansas system, it is evident that students are encouraged to think both critically and holistically about some of our world's most challenges issues and the political or policy solutions that exist to address them.

Presently, I serve as an associate professor and the director of the Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM) at the George Washington University (GW). I am also pleased to share that a few weeks ago, GW promoted me to the rank of professor, starting July 1, 2021. Even though I have spent most of the last twenty years working as a traditional political scientist and a high-profile administrator in academia, I have considerable experience in politics and the private sector. As my curriculum vitae details, I also proudly served as a political appointee at the U.S. Department of Education in President William J. Clinton's administration. I believe these varied professional experiences make me uniquely suited to excel in this position.

With the exception of my position at Villanova University, my work has always involved performing outreach and creating partnerships. Whether in my current role as the director of GSPM or in one of my earliest jobs as a development officer for UCLA, I have long enjoyed centering my efforts on initiating new relationships, cultivating alumni and potential donors, building communities of interest and establishing sustainable collaborations. For instance, since last January, I have been working with about thirty of GSPM's alumni who earned their bachelor's degree at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to develop outreach

plans and engage the faculty at their alma maters for the purposes of exploring some cross-institutional partnerships. Although I have only recently begun speaking with department chairs and career advisors at HBCUs, I am delighted that we have already agreed to form a partnership with the Executive Master's in Public Administration Program at Texas Southern University. We have also held a few virtual career-mentoring sessions ("Working in Washington") with GSPM alumni for undergraduates at different HBCUs and we plan to do more sessions this fall. Further, GSPM will soon host a virtual panel with representatives from the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, the National Black Professional Lobbyist Association, the United Negro College Fund, and Alpha PAC to raise awareness among students of colors about careers in politics and public affairs. While none of these activities would be occurring without the gracious introductions I received from GSPM's alumni, I prioritized these initial outreach efforts last spring and am eager to continue them next fall.

Aside from alumni outreach, partnership development and fundraising, as the director of GSPM, I am responsible for overseeing the faculty, staff and budgets associated with four master's degree programs, a short-term study abroad program, and a school-wide research initiative. With respect to these administrative responsibilities, I have had three goals: (1) enhance the quality of our academic programs and extracurricular experiences; (2) increase and diversify student recruitment; and (3) attract respected academics who along with publishing research are committed to helping students chart professional careers. Despite a number of senior leadership changes at GW, I have consistently achieved these institutional goals and responsibly managed the school's multi-million dollar budget. Consequently, over the last five years, GSPM's reputation and prestige has not only grown in Washington, but also across the country and around the world.

The best example of my commitment to academic program enhancement is the organizational restructuring of GSPM's online degree offerings. Working with staff from across the university and with the master's degree program directors, we developed a comprehensive plan to transition the operations of the online programs from an outside corporate provider to inside the university. Along with migrating course content to a new learning platform, we aligned the in-person and online courses to run on the same 10-week schedule in order to offer all students the flexibility to take classes in both modalities. Further, one of the master's degree programs that had only been available as an in-person program will soon be available to students in the online and hybrid formats. This new 10-week calendar allows GSPM to offer four terms each year, instead of three. Together, these programmatic changes will provide students with greater flexibility and offer more accessibility to those who are not located in Washington. Further, the quarterly calendar will allow all students to progress more quickly towards their degree.

As evidenced on my curriculum vitae, my research falls into two basic areas: presidential leadership and national elections. One common thread linking my work is a concern for the ways that aspirants and incumbents either sustain, undermine or alter institutional arrangements and transform politics. Normative questions relating to the nature and impact of a politician's character also underlie most of the work I have done. Broadly, my research reveals

my abiding interest in the complex interplay between candidate agency, constitutional design, institutional development and time (electoral, historical and political) at the national level. In order to more thoughtfully generalize about candidate agency, my research regularly theorizes about the similarities in the backgrounds and experiences of politicians from different historical eras, political parties or institutional perspectives (e.g., a governor versus a business person). I also take seriously the concepts of individual choice and path dependence in politics. In essence, I am not generally interested in the history of great men, but I am interested in understanding what makes some men (and women!) great political leaders.

Although I continue investigating the myriad consequences of a scandal on a congressional incumbent, I have tended to focus more of my research on the presidency. The reasons for this are that the vagueness of Article II (where the president's formal powers of office reside) and the inadvertent omission of an explicit nomination process (other than the Electoral College) in the Constitution provide the greatest number of opportunities for political agency and the fewest institutional constraints in the American political system. For as Yale scholar Stephen Skowronek noted, "Presidential agency—the efficacy of political action in the presidential office—is primarily a legitimation problem. Incumbents are engaged in a contest to control the meaning of actions that are inherently disruptive of the status quo ante" (2011, p.11). As such, I am fascinated in the ways that presidents (and presidential aspirants) make their decisions and attempt to pursue their interests and legitimate their actions.

Since returning to academia in 2004, I have successfully published peer-reviewed research: journal articles, book chapters, two sole-authored books and two co-edited volumes. Along with copious public scholarship (op-eds and online blogs), I have also published a handful of invited scholarly book chapters, short essays, and other texts.

My most recent book, *Amateur Hour: Presidential Character and the Question of Leadership* (Routledge, 2020), compared the contemporary presidents (from Jimmy Carter through Donald Trump) with two of America's exemplary presidents: George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Applying a framework of courage, curiosity and compassion, I joined a character analysis with a leadership approach and examined the crucial third year of a presidency to gauge its success or failure. Using case studies, I demonstrated that the character of a president's leadership is not altered, but revealed by the office. As such, the likely performance of aspiring presidents can be understood long before they step into the White House.

Although I have only published one article on Clinton's rhetorical leadership ("The Greats and the Great Debate: President William J. Clinton's Use of Presidential Exemplars"), I have presented other papers at conferences examining the ideological foundations of his administration (e.g., "Ambitious Innovation and Abundant Diversity: Alexander Hamilton, William J. Clinton, and the Role of Government in the Economy and Society"). While Clinton went to great lengths in the early years of his presidency to associate with Thomas Jefferson, his administration's policies were—perhaps unwittingly—more ideologically aligned with Alexander Hamilton's philosophy than with that of Jefferson. Possessing this scholarly understanding of the Hamiltonian assumptions in Clinton's domestic and economic policies

would likely assist me, as Dean, to not only further situate his presidency within the context of history, but also elevate the institutional profile of the Clinton School of Public Service.

More broadly, as an educational leader, I strive to foster intellectual curiosity, courage, and compassion both in and out of the classroom. Whether I am engaged with students, faculty or staff, it is my hope that we will all ask incisive questions, dig deep for knowledge, stay with vexing problems, take academic risks and open ourselves to understanding, rather than merely judgment. I am also committed to creating a collaborative and inclusive environment where each individual can be recognized for the unique contributions they can offer.

I believe that I possess the qualifications and experience to make a meaningful and lasting contribution as the Dean of the Clinton School of Public Service at the University of Arkansas. The job would allow me to not only draw upon the complete range of my interests, experience, and knowledge, but also work with the many respected scholars and renowned professionals at the nation's first graduate school of public service.

Should you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lara M. Brown".

Lara M. Brown, Ph.D.